

T.U.L.I.P.*

(The Doctrines of Sovereign Grace)

Preservation/Perseverance of the Saints

So far in these mailers we have looked at the Biblical doctrines of Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, and Irrresistible Grace.

By “Total Depravity” we mean that all men, left to themselves, outside of Jesus Christ, are wholly incapable of doing any good, and inclined to all evil. By nature, man is spiritually *dead* (Ephesians 2:1, Romans 3:9-18, Jeremiah 17:9).

By “Unconditional Election” we mean that God, in His sovereignty, has chosen, merely of grace, out of the whole human race, a certain number of particular individuals to be redeemed in Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:4-5; Rom. 9:13-16; John 17:9)

By “Limited Atonement” we mean that Jesus Christ’s death on the cross did not blot out the sins of every man, but only the sins of those for whom He died, the elect (John 10:11, 15, 25-28; Matt. 1:21). For those for whom Christ died, there is a *complete* covering for sin (Col. 2:13-14).

By “Irrresistible Grace” we mean that God saves His elect people by powerfully (*irresistibly*) bringing them out of their spiritual death, and into spiritual life. This is regeneration, and it is entirely God’s work alone (Eph. 2:1-10; 1 Peter 2:9; John 3:3).

In *this* mailer, we come to the comforting truth of the Preservation of the Saints.

By “Preservation of the Saints” we mean that all those whom God elected in eternity (Unconditional Election), and all those whom Jesus Christ redeemed with His only blood on the cross (Limited Atonement), and all those whom the Holy

Spirit irresistibly brings out of spiritual death to salvation in Christ (Irresistible Grace), *will be surely kept by God’s power in that salvation*. An elect, regenerated child of God (a “saint”) *will not* and *cannot* fall away from his salvation and perish in his sins.

Really, the “Preservation of the Saints” is just an extension of the doctrine of Irresistible Grace, for it is God’s continual exercise of His irresistible grace that preserves His saints in their salvation.

The doctrine of the “Preservation of the Saints” is clearly taught in the Bible.

In John 10:27-28 Jesus says, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them *eternal* life; *and they shall never perish*, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” (See also John 6:39!)

In Philippians 1:6, the Apostle Paul writes, “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath *begun* a good work in you *will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ*.” What God *begins* in an individual, He also *finishes*. (See also Psalm 37:28, Psalm 138:8; 1 Cor. 1:7-9; Hebrews 13:5; John 17).

Really, this doctrine only makes sense: For if God has loved His elect children from all eternity, and has sent Jesus Christ to die for their sins on the cross, and has regenerated them, then how could He possibly *not continue* to protect and preserve His children in His love, and bring them to Himself in heavenly glory (Romans 8:38-39, 5:8-10)?

None of this means that God’s people never fall into sin, or never fall into very *grievous* sins. Just think of Peter’s denial of Jesus (Luke 22:54-62). Yet, what did Jesus say to Peter even *before* Peter fell into his sin? “Simon, Simon [Peter], Behold,

Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, *that thy faith fail not...*” (Luke 22:31-32). God’s people might lose a *sense* of God’s favor for a time, because they are choosing to walk in sin, but God never wholly withdraws His Holy Spirit from His true children, so that they die spiritually.

This doctrine, therefore, gives great comfort and assurance to God’s people, even in the face of their own sins. For God’s people know that if God would leave *any* part of salvation up to them in any way, up to their own will or their own abilities, they *would* perish. But God takes care to let His people know that He will always keep them from falling away.

“Salvation is of the LORD,” and therefore I can have assurance that the God who loves me today, and gives me life today, will also be the God who loves me tomorrow, and will *preserve* spiritual life in me, no matter what may happen tomorrow. God’s love never changes!!

Some people, when they first learn about this doctrine, respond this way: “If you believe in the preservation of the saints, then why not go out and live a sinful and careless life? What’s stopping you from indulging in all kinds of sinful pleasure, if you think that God will love you anyway?”

If you feel that way, then you must ask yourself: Do *you* know the Lord at all? Has His grace truly worked within *you*? Does the life of Jesus Christ beat in your own heart? Do you rest in God’s salvation? If so, then you also know: That salvation is so dear to you, so precious to you, that you will want to show God your thankfulness and your love for Him by living a life that is pleasing to Him – a life of trusting and *obeying*. (1 John 5:3-4)

This is how the Holy Spirit works within a Christian: the Holy Spirit gives him eternal life; the Holy Spirit gives him the assurance that he shall never perish; and then the Holy Spirit also works thankfulness within that person so that he strives to honor God and show his love to God in all he does.

This is the Christian's experience; this is the Christian's joy.

*T.U.L.I.P. is an acronym for what is commonly called the five points of Calvinism.

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